

**12 FEBRUARY 2002**



***Communications and Information***

***SUSPENSE AND CONTROL OF  
CONGRESSIONAL AND WHITE HOUSE  
CORRESPONDENCE***

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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OPR: HQ USAFA/IG (SMSgt Lewis)

Certified by: HQ USAFA/IG (Lt Col Cline)

Pages: 7

Distribution: F

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This instruction implements AFD 37-1, *Air Force Information Management* (will convert to AFD 33-3, *Information Management*), as it specifically relates to information management, suspense, and control of correspondence. This instruction gives more detailed guidance on preparing and processing replies to congressional and executive inquiries, and it clarifies the timelines for processing the various types of congressional inquiries through United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) agencies. This instruction also responds to processing and preparing replies to congressional members and White House inquiries by Air Staff and Secretariat agencies.

**1. General Terms for Inquiries:**

1.1. Secretary of the Air Force/Legislative Liaison (SAF/LL). Routine inquiries addressed to LL representatives.

**2. General Time Limitations.** Communications with Congress and the Executive Branch of government are extremely sensitive. Therefore, it is imperative the Air Force response be both prompt and accurate. Cases that require the Superintendent's (HQ USAFA/CC) signature are top priority, and tasked agencies will process them expeditiously. After receiving an initial tasker from the USAFA/Inspector General (HQ USAFA/IG), the office of primary responsibility (OPR) action officer must forward a fully coordinated proposed reply to HQ USAFA/IG by the suspense date. No coordinating office should hold responses for more than 1 workday. After completion of all coordination, return the proposed response to HQ USAFA/IG for continued coordination and approval for release and signature. All responses will be hand carried and not forwarded through the base distribution system.

2.1. If there is a problem meeting the suspense, Direct Reporting Unit (DRU) agencies, and wing executive officers must immediately request an extension through HQ USAFA/IG. If partial information is available for a substantive interim reply, OPRs will furnish this information no later than the suspense date.

2.2. For telephonic or informal inquiries, HQ USAFA/IG will determine whether an interim reply is required, including type and date of final reply to Congress.

**3. Responsibility of the Action Officers.** HQ USAFA/IG's organizational action officers monitor each assigned congressional or executive inquiry until the final reply is sent.

3.1. All action officers must furnish factual responsive information on or before the suspense date or comply with procedures in paragraph 2. For inquiries initiated by a third party, HQ USAFA/IG will determine whether the subject of the inquiry needs to furnish a Privacy Act release. If needed, inquiries involving cadets will be verified through the Dean of Faculty Customer Service (HQ USAFA/DFRR), otherwise HQ USAFA/IG staff will ask the subject to sign a release authorizing the release of information outside of the Department of Defense. If the subject is no longer on active duty and the requested information is subject to the Privacy Act, HQ USAFA/IG office will provide the requested information and state they could not obtain a Privacy Act release. SAF/LL will then notify the Member of Congress that the requested information is not releasable until his or her office obtains the individual's consent. **NOTE:** When individuals write on their own behalf requesting congressional assistance, they in effect authorize release of personal information back to the congressional office and no Privacy Act release is needed.

3.2. Should the HQ USAFA/IG office receive an inquiry not within its purview, they will immediately contact SAF/LL for further referral or transfer to appropriate agencies. Likewise, if HQ USAFA/IG determines other offices may need to provide information to fully address an inquiry, additional coordinator information will be provided in paragraph 1. of the AF Form 1768, Staff Summary Sheet, tasking.

**4. Coordination Procedure Within USAFA.** Unless otherwise directed, the requirement for a written, coordinated reply applies equally to written and telephonic inquiries referred to HQ USAFA/IG. OPRs or action agencies will:

4.1. Coordinate the proposed reply as indicated on initial IG tasking routed by AF Form 1768. Include the name, and directorate, of each person who coordinated before submitting draft reply to HQ USAFA/IG.

4.2. Obtain signature and coordination at the most appropriate level for issues on a policy standpoint, generally a colonel or above.

4.3. Upon receipt of congressional inquiry through channels other than HQ USAFA/IG, immediately fax inquiry to HQ USAFA/IG @ 333-4004 as required for appropriate tasking.

**5. Coordination Procedure within Harmon Hall.** When HQ USAFA/IG forwards a proposed congressional or executive inquiry reply to an office within Harmon Hall, that office will expedite their review and return it to HQ USAFA/IG within 24 hours.

**6. Handling Direct Inquiries.** When a unit or directorate office receives a congressional or executive inquiry directly, the recipient will:

6.1. Retain a copy of the correspondence or a summary if received by telephone contact.

6.2. Forward the inquiry to HQ USAFA/IG. Refer to paragraph 4.3.

6.3. HQ USAFA/IG will furnish the required information or proposed response to SAF/LL. SAF/LL will determine appropriate signature element, prepare, and dispatch the final reply.

**7. Preparing the Reply.** Each proposed reply to a congressional or executive inquiry must be timely, factual, and responsive. OPRs must submit the reply in draft form. Since the action officer will generally base the reply on Air Force policy, senior officials must review it. Action officers must adhere to the following specific procedures:

7.1. Format. Staff agencies should provide a double-spaced draft reply to HQ USAFA/IG in a Microsoft Word document by diskette. See [Attachment 1-Attachment 2](#) for sample letter format, and [Attachment 3](#) for listing of Common Errors to avoid.

7.2. Signature Level. After coordination (paragraphs [4.](#) and [5.](#)), each memorandum transmitting a proposed reply should be signed by:

7.2.1. Wing or Vice commander; or,

7.2.2. Directorate

7.3. Background Information. To ensure HQ USAFA/IG will understand the position expressed in the proposed reply, the action officer will also include background information. If this information should not be included in the final reply, mark this information "For HQ USAFA/IG only." The decision to release this material rests with the HQ USAFA/CC or Vice Superintendent (HQ USAFA/CV).

## **8. Direct Replies:**

8.1. To Congress and Executive Branches. Normally, only HQ USAFA/CC or CV releases communications to a member of Congress or their staff unless otherwise delegated. If direct communication by USAFA is appropriate, a colonel or GS equivalent should sign the document. In all cases, furnish HQ USAFA/IG with an information copy of the inquiry within 24 hours. These offices should fully coordinate with HQ USAFA/IG before release if the issue is or could be contentious. In all cases, the responses must be prompt and completely address the issue.

8.2. To Constituents. Once HQ USAFA/CC answers a member of Congress on a constituent's concern, the constituent will sometimes write directly to HQ USAFA/CC/CV disputing the information and addressing additional concerns. If appropriate, HQ USAFA/IG will staff these inquiries to the action agency for a reply back to the constituent. The action agency will process a copy of the reply to HQ USAFA/IG for coordination. This applies only to congressional inquiries addressed to USAFA senior leadership.

**9. Replies to White House Inquiries.** When correspondence addressed to the President or Vice President is referred to the Department of the Air Force for reply, SAF/LL will send it to the cognizant Air Staff or Secretariat office for reply. The OPR will coordinate the reply as tasked in paragraphs [4.](#) and [5.](#), and obtain the approval of a colonel or above. Staff agencies will provide a double-spaced draft reply to HQ USAFA/IG in a Microsoft Word document on diskette by the suspense date.

**10. Controlling Correspondence.** HQ USAFA/IG office is the focal point for controlling all congressional correspondence from or to members of Congress, either received directly or from higher headquarters such as SAF/LL.

10.1. HQ USAFA/IG logs all congressional or White House correspondence into the Automated Case Tracking System database and determines the appropriate USAFA OPR to work the issue.

10.2. HQ USAFA/IG is responsible for dispatching high-level inquiries and direct congressionals forwarded to USAFA for response and is signed out by USAFA/CC or CV.

10.3. HQ USAFA/IG will take response diskette from the staff agency and make a copy of the original file followed by the letters "IG." The copied file ending with "IG" will be used by all subsequent editors and will contain the final version of the response. The original diskette with the original file and "IG" version will be returned to the executive officers of the responding staff agency.

**11. Form Adopted.** AF Form 1768, **Staff Summary Sheet.**

TERESA H. CLINE, Lt Col, USAF  
Inspector General

**Attachment 1**

**SAMPLE PERSONAL LETTER FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT'S/VICE  
SUPERINTENDENT'S SIGNATURE**

DO NOT DATE LETTER

Col Make My Day  
Vice Superintendent  
2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 342  
USAF Academy CO 80840-5001  
*(two line spaces – three returns)*

The Honorable Got A. Question  
123 Whatever Drive  
Wherever USA 12345

Dear Mr. Question  
*(Mr. For Reps/Senator for Senators)*

This is the proper format for a Personal Letter for the Superintendent's/Vice Superintendent's signature. For Personal Letters signed by the Superintendent, the command section will use the Superintendent's blue letterhead.

Note that paragraphs are indented one-half or five spaces and are not numbered. Always use one-inch left and right margins. Use 10- to 12-pitch font, Times New Roman. Always check Tongue and Quill for exact format. Also, note the letter always has a salutation, a closing, and a one-line signature block. Notice there is no punctuation after salutation or closing. When closing, use "Sincerely" for those who have less or equal rank and "Very respectfully" for those with higher rank. Signature block is always placed at least three spaces to the right of page center.

Thank you for your interest regarding pilot slots at the Academy. We trust this information is helpful.

*(one line space – two returns)*  
Very respectfully

*(four line spaces – five returns)*  
Make My Day, Col, USAF

*(two line spaces – three returns)*  
cc:  
List any courtesy copies here, if applicable  
*(note: if cc follows Attachments, then use one line—two returns)*

**Attachment 2****RESPONDING TO A CONGRESSIONAL GOING BACK TO A HIGHER  
HEADQUARTERS**

Dear Mr. Falcon (*Mr. for Reps/Senator for Senators*)

This is the proper format for a double-space draft responding to a congressional going back to a higher headquarters (other than USAFA) for sign out.

Note that paragraphs are indented one half-inch or five spaces and are not numbered. Always use one-inch left and right margins. Use 10- or 12-pitch font, Times New Roman. Note there is no closing salutation or signature block; this will be finalized by higher headquarters.

Provide a summary of mentioned facts in your responses and thank members for the opportunity to address their concerns.

### Attachment 3

#### COMMON ERRORS

Did I Fail to PROOF and use spell-check and grammar check?-- always proof entire document after any corrections are made; always use spell and grammar check.

Did I Fail to use Tongue & Quill and HQ USAFA Command Section Helpful Hints Guide? (N:\Superintendent\Supt\IM\Guide.doc)

- Addresses are complete.
  - Zip Code: Use the plus-4 in the zip code whenever possible
    - For the Superintendent and Vice Superintendent, it's 80840-5001
  - Always use full name in address
  - Always use full address; i.e., HQ USAFA/JA (not just JA)
  - For personal letters going off base, include return address
    - Return street address is optional for onbase correspondence
- In salutation line use:
  - Dear Mr. Smith (not Dear Congressman or Representative Smith)
  - Dear Senator Smith (for all Senators)
- In body of letter spell out rank. Do not start a sentence with an abbreviation
- In Complimentary Closing for the Superintendent's signature use:
  - "Sincerely" for anyone of lower or equal rank
  - "Very respectfully" for all others (4-stars, SECAF, SECDEF, Members of Congress, Senators, Board of Visitors, etc.)
  - Do NOT use "Respectfully"
  - Guidance is also for Vice Superintendent's correspondence
- Staff Summary Sheet packages
  - Do NOT staple package together
  - Number tabs (paper or plastic indicator) to help locate the attachments. Position the tab for **Attachment 1** to the lower right corner of a blank sheet of paper. Position the next tab slightly higher on a separate sheet so all tabs can be seen (AFMAN 33-326, *Preparing Official Communications*).